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8. — *La Chanson de Roland*. [Première partie.] *Texte critique accompagné d'une traduction nouvelle et précédé d'une introduction historique, par LÉON GAUTIER. Avec eaux-fortes par CHIFFLART et V. FOULQUIER et un fac-simile.* Tours : Alfred Mame et fils, éditeurs. 1872. Grand in-8°.

*Id.* *Seconde partie, contenant les notes et variantes, le glossaire et la table, etc.* Tours. 1872. Grand in-8°.

THESE sumptuous volumes must fill the heart of every lover of the old French poetry with delight. It is something of a reparation for the neglect of three hundred years, that at last so noble a monument has been erected to the brave old epic. The art of the printer and the art of the engraver have combined with the most sound and patient scholarship to do it honor. The heavy calendered paper, with its broad margins, and the clear and beautiful type, are worthy of the celebrated presses from which it is issued, and which the editor is perhaps right in calling the first in the world, and are worthy also of the poem which had been justly famous and unjustly forgotten before the art of printing was invented. The spirited etchings of M. Chiffart, though not contributing very much to the elucidation of the text, have a rude vigor of drawing, a vehemence of movement, and a sharpness of contrast of lights and shadows, which accord well with the spirit of the poem. The woodcuts representing ancient weapons and armor, and tapestries and *vitreaux* on which incidents in the life of Roland are portrayed, are numerous and well executed. The work is one to be elegantly bound and daintily handled, and seems even too fine and costly to be subjected to the hard usage of the study-table.

Yet it is not simply an *édition de luxe* ; the name of its editor is a sufficient guaranty for its scientific value. M. Gautier is well known as one of the leading French scholars in the field of mediæval language and literature, and holds the position of professor in the *École des Chartes*. He stands with MM. Paulin Paris, Guessard, Meyer, Gaston Paris, Brachet, and others, at the head of that group of accomplished and patriotic students who are not contented with simply bringing out of the dust of libraries and the confusion of manuscripts the buried treasures of the heroic age of their national poetry, but consider it a duty to present them, with all the aids which historical and linguistic science affords, to the friends of letters and of culture. It was in this spirit that M. Gautier, after editing the works of Adam de St. Victor, and printing for the first time the romance of the

*Entrée en Espagne*, published, in 1865, his work on the *Epopées françaises*, a most thorough and comprehensive description and discussion of the numerous poems known as the *Chansons de Geste*, in which the latest conclusions of modern scholarship on all the questions connected with the subject are brought together, and in which his own investigations, covering many years and embracing a vast number of manuscripts in the libraries of France, Italy, and England, led to many new and important results.

The present work belongs to the same enterprise of scientific *vulgarisation*, as the French call it, and is prepared in the same thorough manner. Our limits restrict us to some observations upon the merits of the edition, and do not allow us to speak at length of the historical and poetical value of the poem itself. In its concise vigor and dignity of language, its simple and large style of narrative, its vivid pictures of great deeds of arms, its noble conceptions of royalty, loyalty, and courage, its pathos, its purity, its devout faith in Christianity, it not only stands far above the other poems of that age, but deserves to rank among the few great epics of the world, while the illustrations which it offers of the ideas that filled men's minds in the period which gave birth to modern literature, and of the military and judicial usages of the Middle Ages, give it a permanent historical importance. In its oldest form, like all the best and most ancient French epics, it is not long, according to the measure of the later imitations (it consists of four thousand lines, and the *Lion de Bourges* contains forty thousand), and the text, together with a translation, line for line, *en regard*, occupies but little more than one quarter of the whole work. The manuscripts are exceedingly faulty, inconsistent, and obscure, the work of ignorant and careless scribes, who mingled the forms of the language as it was written in their own times and in their own dialects with the forms which they found in the older copies before them. The earliest editors, notably M. Michel and M. Génin, contented themselves with publishing the best of these texts, that in the Bodleian Library, not very accurately copied, with various corrections, more or less valuable, of their own. This was much; in fact, the importance of M. Michel's edition can hardly be overstated; but something more than this was needed, and the progress made since 1850 (the date of M. Génin's edition) in the grammar of the language of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the publication of other texts and *remaniements* and versions (especially in German), have made something more than this possible. M. Natalis de Wailly in his edition of Joinville had set the example, which M. Gaston Paris has since followed in his edition of the *Vie de St. Alexis*, of a critical text,

establishing the readings by a collation of manuscripts, and fixing the forms by a study of the dialect and period of the writer. This M. Gautier has undertaken to do for the *Chanson de Roland*, and it is, perhaps, the most important feature of his edition. Doubtless it was a delicate and difficult task, though he was not absolutely the first to attempt it. M. Th. Müller, taking the same Oxford manuscript as the basis of his edition, had already used in the preparation of the text the Venetian manuscript, the *remaniements*, and the German versions. He was thus enabled to supply many deficiencies, to correct many faults, to put a meaning into many lines which were unintelligible before, and to arrange in their proper order many verses which were out of place. M. Gautier has gone further in the same direction. In addition to a renewed collation of previous editions with the manuscripts, he has endeavored by a minute study of the poem itself to discover the grammatical rules which were observed in the manuscript from which the Oxford copy was made, but which the copyist often violated; and these rules once established, he has rigidly followed them. He has tried to establish a uniform orthography throughout the poem. In a word, his task has been to settle the text of the *Chanson* as it would have been written by an intelligent and careful scribe at the same time and in the same dialect. It should be stated, however, that in every case where he has deviated from the Oxford text he has indicated the reading of that manuscript in the notes, and has given at length his reasons for the emendation. The omissions of the Oxford manuscript are supplied from the others, and these additions are thrown into the language and metre of the original, in conformity with the rules of grammar and dialect already established; they amount to some two hundred verses, but the author has modestly placed them among the notes. It would probably be too much to say that we have in this way obtained the text in its ultimate form, but we certainly have one far more nearly correct, complete, and consistent than any that has hitherto been published; and the example of M. Gautier, in addition to the others whom we have named, will, we hope, be found to have fixed for future editions of the old French romances that critical method of preparing the text which has been practised so long and with such good results in the case of the ancient classics.

In his Translation, M. Gautier has, as a matter of course, not imitated the unaccountable freak of M. Génin, who in his edition amused himself by trying to turn French of the eleventh century into French of the fifteenth. He has rendered each line of the original into a line of prose, which, if not always literal, is clear, elegant, and spirited.

Indeed we are tempted to say that it is *too* spirited, for the style of M. Gautier, we may remark here once for all, is singularly emphatic and vehement. If in his Translation he substitutes a repetitious, declamatory intensity of expression for the severe simplicity of the original, in his Introduction and Notes he writes with the fervor of a popular orator, and argues with the passion of an advocate who has an obstinate antagonist before him. To take a single example, he renders the line,

“Ne li faldrunt pur mort ne pur destreit,”

“Oui, quelle que soit leur détresse et même devant la mort, ils ne feront jamais défaut à l'Empereur” ; but this is a paraphrase, not a translation. And we cannot but consider the frequent appeals to the reader, the “Est-il vrai, oui ou non ?” the “Non, non, non, mille fois non !” the “Voici ! Voici !” the small capitals and the exclamation-points, as falling somewhat below the severe dignity of critical scholarship.

Yet we are not disposed to find much fault with the enthusiasm of our author, which has led him into such extensive and wearisome investigations, and which makes his Introduction, as it makes his *Epopées françaises*, not only very instructive but very lively reading. In this Introduction, occupying nearly half of the first volume, he discusses in his fiery way all the questions which the poem suggests, from the origin of epic poetry in general down to the numerous works which within the last forty years have been published in regard to this particular poem and the legend which it embodies. He sketches the origin and growth of the tradition, indicates its historical basis, and analyzes its characters. With most scholars he considers it to have been of German origin, and holds that the poem was developed out of brief popular *cantilènes*, which very probably were never reduced to writing, and which have wholly disappeared, except that a number of episodes in the poem may be distinguished as representing some of these earlier ballads. The versification is discussed at considerable length, and a classified list of all the assonances is added in a note, — a valuable help in the study of this important feature of the romances. As to the origin of the heroic measure, M. Gautier adheres to the opinion expressed in his *Epopées françaises*, that it proceeded directly from the Latin “dactylic trimeter hypercatalectic,” — an opinion which has been warmly, and, as it appears to us, successfully controverted by MM. Paul Meyer and Gaston Paris. On the vexed question of the “similar couplets,” M. Gautier, modifying somewhat the view expressed in his former work, admits that one or two seem to countenance the theory that they are different redactions of the same

original stanza ; but in most of them he finds such differences as lead him to conclude that in many cases the poet purposely, with an art that was rude but very effective, sought to deepen the impression produced by some telling passage by repeating the same thoughts in slightly varied language, adding to each successive stanza some new feature, which served to complete the picture. Finally, he leaves the obscure question of the origin and meaning of the famous refrain *Aoi*, as he found it, unsolved.

The chapters on the date and authorship of the poem do not add much to our knowledge on these points, though the author handles rather roughly the theory of M. Génin, that it was the work of a Benedictine monk by the name of Théroulde, and gives some plausible reasons for believing that it was composed in the dialect and vicinity of Avranches.

After a few pages devoted to setting forth the beauty of the poem, the editor takes up in turn the different *remaniements*, or, as he calls them, outrages, to which it has been subjected. Hardly anything gives a better idea of the history of letters in France during the Middle Ages than the successive phases of the Roland legend, which are here related with great minuteness and with abundant illustrations. First, the authors of the Chronicle of Turpin attempted to give it a clerical and edifying character. Then the cultivated ears of the thirteenth century were offended by the barbarous system of assonances on which the original poem was constructed, and enterprising *clerics* undertook to change this into a system of rhymes. One modification brought about another. The alteration of the last word led to the remodeling of the line, or, if the case was troublesome, one line was stretched out into two. The license thus acquired, justified at first by the necessities of the rhyme, was not slow in introducing other changes for which no reason existed except in the corrupt taste of the author and of his readers ; for by this time the poem had ceased to be sung to the accompaniment of the viol, and had passed into the dignified retirement of illuminated manuscripts and rich libraries. New scenes and characters were introduced into it, some of the original ones were suppressed, others prolonged and diluted, till the concise and vigorous poem grew into a prolix and tiresome composition of four or five times its original length, from which every trace of the original beauty had disappeared. Under this treatment, of course, the spirit of the legend suffered not less than its form. The figure of *notre emperere magnes*, who was more than two hundred years old, and more than fifteen feet in height, dwindled to that of an insignificant and even contemptible

monarch. His twelve mighty paladins became pious mystics. The thirty pure and pathetic lines which tell all the story of the "*bele Alde*" grew into as many folios of sentimental rubbish. The simple but devout faith in God, "*veire paterne, ki unkes ne mentit*," gave place to the subtleties of a pedantic theology. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries carried the work of transformation still further, and commenced the long series of romances in prose of which the degenerate offspring are still to be seen in the little volumes of the *Bibliothèque bleue*, the delight even in our day of the population of the villages and rural districts of France. Detestable as these different transformations are from a literary point of view, they clearly attest the power and popularity of the legend, shed light on many of the obscurities of the older versions, and exhibit vividly the intellectual condition of France in the successive centuries from which they date.

But the popularity of the legend was not confined to the country in which it originated; and not the least interesting and valuable portion of M. Gautier's Introduction is that which sketches its history in other lands and languages. The *Ruolandes Liet*, which has also its *remaniements*, is a translation of our *Chanson*, composed probably about the middle of the twelfth century. The stirring story appears also in the literatures of the Netherlands, of Iceland, of Denmark, of England. In Italy it passed through nearly the same transformations as in France, existing first as an oral tradition, then versified and sung by the *jongleurs*, then thrown into the form of a sustained epic, then translated into prose, — the prose of the *Realì di Francia*, — and finally taking poetic shape again under the touch of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto. Even in Spain it was popular till a reaction of national pride created the myth of Bernardo del Carpio, and among the prose romances which reigned from the thirteenth century to Cervantes, not a few which celebrate the exploits of the *Emperador Carlomagno y los doce Pares de Francia* are French in origin and spirit.

Returning to France, the author gives some striking examples of the indifference with which the earlier literature was regarded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Roland legend was not wholly forgotten. Quinault took it for the subject of one of his operas; Tressan travestied it in a jingling ballad in octosyllabics: —

"Roland, étant petit garçon,  
Faisait souvent pleurer sa mère," etc.

The Bollandists intimated that *perhaps* it would be a good thing to publish some of these old poems. But it was not till within the last

forty years that these great monuments of an earlier age received the serious study which they deserved. The remarkable revival of interest in them which the last half-century has brought about, and which is not the least striking chapter in their history, is described in detail in the last sections of M. Gautier's Introduction.

It remains for us to speak in a few words of the Notes and Vocabulary which form the second volume, and which are extended to unusual proportions. Into the former are introduced not only critical discussions of doubtful readings, but numerous monographs on the heroes of the poem, on most of the other *Chansons de Geste*, and on points of geography, archæology, and feudal law, which are connected with the poetical literature. They serve, therefore, as a valuable help in the study, not only of this particular poem, but of all the class of works to which it belongs.

The Glossary will be found hardly less widely useful. The aim of the author has been to give not only every word, but every form in the text, with its appropriate description, definition, and etymology, and the indication of the line where it occurs. That there are in it some omissions, some inaccuracies, some conjectures which may fairly be questioned, does not prevent it from being very full and trustworthy, and, in the absence of any complete dictionary of old French, it cannot but be welcomed as an important aid to the study of the language of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It is so arranged that a beginner can use it, and no one who wishes to acquaint himself with the oldest literature of modern Europe can find a more satisfactory text-book for the commencement of his studies than this edition of the *Chanson de Roland*.

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9. — *The Life of John Warren*, M. D., Surgeon-General during the War of the Revolution ; first Professor of Anatomy and Surgery in Harvard College ; President of the Massachusetts Medical Society, etc. By EDWARD WARREN, M. D. Boston : Noyes, Holmes, & Co. 1874. 8vo. pp. 568.

MOST timely is the appearance of this substantial volume, containing the biography of a man who filled with distinguished ability and fidelity many prominent places of high trust and usefulness in our Revolutionary era. As the centenary of the stirring events and the momentous issues of that epoch is now engaging the thoughts of multitudes in this great enfranchised nation, and local and general celebrations are prompting a new generation of readers to acquaint